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HERON IN MOONLIGHT

by Yeishi

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THE ROCKEFELLER COLLECTION OF JAPANESE COLOR PRINTS

THERE is a pure and lovely passion which floods the hearts of the Japanese people at all seasons. Among no other people has it such universality. It is their absorbing love for, their exquisite sensitiveness to, the beauties of nature. Every Japanese, from the highest to the humblest, is moved by the loveliness of the unfolding of flower buds or the rhythmic pattern of a bird's flight against the sky. The work of a busy nation halts, as if by enchantment, when the fragile cherry blossoms bring a flush of pink to the green countryside; and when the autumn moon pours its chilly splendour over the world, bed-mats are forsaken and thousands of delighted eyes contemplate the illusory play of pallid light and vibrant shadow. A jinriksha coolie will pause to call his patron's attention to a wistaria's purple glory, and a country woman gathering fagots in the wood will crown her burden with a few red maple leaves. Much is said of the martial energy of the Japanese, but here is a more fundamental, a profounder trait of this people, because it animates not only the sons and grandsons of the old *samurai* but the farmer and the woodchopper, the black-eyed children playing in country lanes, and the coy *geisha*.

Since this adoration of nature is so wide and bright a thread in the fabric of Japanese life, its expression in art is the truest messenger of the spirit of Japan. With her gift of nearly seven hundred color prints of birds and flowers, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. has brought to the Museum in the most direct way the choicest treasure to be found in that land of rugged green isles,—the reflection of nature's manifold beauties in the mirror of the human soul. Moreover, of all the arts of Japan, the color print is the most specifically Japanese. In painting and in sculpture, Japan was a faithful disciple of China; in the humbler, more popular art of the color print, she was essentially, individualistically herself. Here was no grafted blossom

but a new species springing from native soil, a new creation impregnated with the peculiar charm, humor and sprightliness of the Japanese spirit.

Of course, as of many other things, China was probably the mother of the color print. During the 17th century, various books of colored prints were published under such poetic titles as the *Mustard Seed Garden* and *Ten Bamboo Hall*. These contained careful xylographic reproductions of painted nature studies, and their purpose was to serve as exemplars for aspirants in the art of painting. Mrs. Rockefeller's collection of Japanese prints is augmented by some of these delicately rendered studies. Placed beside some of the finer prints of Hiroshige and Hokusai, they illustrate tellingly the great difference between the prints of China and those of Japan. Unlike the Chinese prints, the Japanese color prints exist for their own sake. They rest on their own aesthetic birthright. They do not attempt to imitate painting but to express in terms of their own special technique a fresh and original interpretation of the visual world.

Although the Chinese color prints were known in Japan and were not without their influence upon Japanese designers, yet it may safely be claimed that the Japanese color print was an independent development from the early black and white woodcuts and was fostered by a new school of painting which evolved from the social background of the 17th century. Under the iron rule of the Tokugawa Shoguns, the energies formerly dissipated in civil dissensions were released for the arts of peace; Yedo, where the Shogun resided, became a teeming metropolis; and the artisan and merchant classes grew in prosperity and influence. Certain painters of genius, notably Matahei, turned from the rarified, somewhat effete atmosphere of the traditional courtly schools and sought inspiration in the life of everyday, and the school of Ukiyoe, or "Mirror of the Passing World," was born. It was a Ukiyoe painter, Moronobu, who was the first great Japanese artist to attain fame through his prints.

He sensed the great possibilities of the printed picture and lent his unusual talents to the illustration of books and the designing of single sheets portraying the most noted characters in the new world of the popular theatre. In catering to ephemeral, mundane taste, he did not stoop toward cheapness. By dipping his art in the river of contemporary life, it took on an added brilliancy and gave an impetus to the

of the century, orange-red color was applied by hand on certain areas of the black outline. These prints were known as *tan-ye*, from the Japanese name for red lead, *tan*. Later, green and yellow were added, and later still, a rose-red known as *beni*. It was not until the century had reached its fourth decade that any attempt was made to produce a true color print. The idea of using more than one wood-block



MANDARIN DUCKS

Black and White Print

by Masanobu

school of Ukiyoe which was to carry it to eventual triumph.

In the history of Japanese prints, the period from about 1660 to about 1760 is known as the period of "the Primitives." During this period, the craft developed from simple and bold book illustrations and single-sheet prints in black and white to a complex and subtle art-form in polychrome. The large black and white print, usually portraying an actor, prevailed throughout the 1600's, but with the turn

instead of applying any additional colors by hand is credited to an artist named Okumura Masanobu (1691-1768). His importance as a print-designer can hardly be overestimated, and during his long and productive life of nearly eighty years, his was a dominant personality among men of vigorous genius.

The Rockefeller Collection contains five prints by Masanobu. They are all large black and white prints of bold and distinctive design. The impression conveyed is

essentially that of ink drawings, with similar modulation in the width and intensity of line. They are virile and original compositions, imbued with rhythmic vitality. In one, a Mandarin duck preens its breast beside iris blooms while its mate swims at-

either a bird or a flower. One shows two Buddhist lions fighting, and the other, a superb design, shows three frolicsome horses.

Masanobu's most promising pupil was his own son, Toshinobu, who died young.



WHITE CAT AND FLOWERING BEGONIA

by Harunobu

tentively in the nearby pond; in another, a falcon, a massive bird of prey, stands with tethered feet upon his perch; while in a third, a peacock struts with spread tail, the artist ably conveying the mincing pride of the resplendent bird. The remaining two Masanobu prints are among the few prints in the collection which do not portray

There are two prints by him in the collection. On a print showing a falcon on a rock watching a waterfall appears some hand-applied color, and on the rocks in the foreground, patches of black lacquer. The application of lacquer to prints to heighten their brilliancy is said to have been first introduced by Masanobu. The second Tosh-

inobu print is distinctly humorous. It represents an owl perched on the handle of a hoe, holding in his beak a tobacco pipe and pendent pouch, while above his head flutter a number of chattering sparrows. It is a curious, fascinating print and is probably a rebus.

One of the most skillful designers of *urishi-ye*, or lacquer-prints, was Shinenaga (1697-1756). He was a faithful but not subservient follower of Masanobu, and it is interesting to compare two prints by him in the Rockefeller Collection with the two prints of similar subject matter by Masanobu already mentioned. One shows a peacock with spread tail, a more circumspect and orderly design than Masanobu's, but possessing less vitality. Shigenaga's print of Mandarin ducks in a pond is less direct than Masanobu's ducks, but is a very pleasant print. The ducks are extremely alert, the foliage vigorously drawn. Shigenaga must have been a gifted teacher, for nearly all the great designers of the following generation were his pupils, notably the famous Harunobu.

A young contemporary of Masanobu and Shigenaga was that interesting artist, Kiyomitsu (1735-1785). He made many beautiful prints with two and three color blocks, and it was he who discovered the lovely tones that could be produced by overlapping one color upon another. The print by which he is represented in the Rockefeller Collection, however, has no color. It is a very rare key-block print of a *sumi-e*, literally "ink picture," and shows in fine, delicate black outline a design of cranes wading in a stream beneath a flowering plum and the boughs of a pine-tree, while high overhead is the large, white disc of the moon. As an artist, Kiyomitsu belongs with the group known as the Primitives, but his life-span carries him well into the succeeding period of the early polychrome masters.

Polychrome prints, or *nishiki-ye*, "brocade painting," in which a separate block was made for each tone, gave opportunity for great richness and variety of effect. The artist most responsible for its develop-

ment was Shigenaga's pupil, Harunobu. From 1674 until his death in 1770, one beautiful print followed another from his hand. His service to the technique of the color print has been described as a turning of a three-stringed lute into a violin. In other words, he increased the print designer's palette from three colors to as many as fifteen.

Harunobu had deep faith in the significance of the art of the print designer. He regarded the Ukiyo school in no way inferior to the classical Kano and Tosa schools, and he deliberately turned from the popular theatre as a source of inspiration to portray the flower-like ladies of the aristocracy engaged in their innocent and charming occupations. A young girl playing with a kitten, or a lady absorbed in contemplation of the moon and the flowering trees, provided him with motives for exquisite works of art. It was inevitable that he should appreciate the quiet beauties of the old Chinese color prints and should emulate the interest in flower motives they displayed.

The single print by Harunobu in the Rockefeller Collection demonstrates the brilliancy of his color, his sensitiveness to the charm of little familiar happenings, and his interest in nature. (Illustrated on page 4.) Beside a large pink-flowering begonia, a white cat with a pink bow around his neck lifts his head to direct his yellow eyes on two orange and pink butterflies fluttering over the flowers. The foreground is yellow-green, the vivid begonia blossoms of two shades of pink are seen against a pale grayish-blue sky, and behind the begonia plant are seen yellow-centered purple chrysanthemums. The cat is embossed upon the paper, producing a very naturalistic effect, *gauffrage*, or "blind printing," being used to indicate his fur. Pussy is contentedly curled up and is not sufficiently interested to bestir himself, but the fluttering insects amuse him. Such a little incident,—the momentary amusement of a pet cat during his garden siesta,—but treated with such insight and sensitiveness to beauty that it is a true work of art. It



GOLDEN PHEASANTS
by Koryusai

sings of the lovely color and the exquisite small joys of the everyday world.

Koryusai, Harunobu's disciple and intimate friend, devoted himself to similar idyllic subjects. He was, however, particularly able in depicting birds, so that it is not surprising that in a collection of bird and flower prints one should find twenty-four from his hand. What a diversified and charming array of feathered creatures! There is a delightful peacock in soft greens, a single great crane on the wing, mandarin ducks affectionately billing. There is the well-known print of the fighting cocks with its interesting contrast of the white and the red bird. There are crane prints of complex and beautiful pattern. A sympathetic harmony of bird portrayed and the aesthetic note played upon in the print is observable always, whether it is the quiet majesty of the falcon, the

gaiety of the buncho, or the ethereal loveliness of the snowy egret. An exquisite print is one showing two white herons. One bird stands on a snow-covered rock gazing over snow-laden bamboo into pale blue-green water, while above, another bird, on the wing, is silhouetted against a peach-colored sky. The lyrical loveliness of sunset, its hush, its evanescent beauty, is captured for us. Again, a print of great refinement is a monochrome design in the shape of a fan wherein a heron is perched on a snow-laden willow. Only gray, black and the white of the paper, yet it seems the cold of winter, the mild light of a gray sky, the wizardry of soft, new-fallen snow, could not be more effectively expressed.

An unusual print by Koryusai is a long *surimono*, a horizontal print in which about two dozen white plum blossoms are scattered over a pale gray ground. The pattern and rhythm are very subtle, and the subject, pale blossoms floating on pale water, most delicately poetical.

But Koryusai reached the heights in his pillar prints, *hashira-ye*, those very narrow, very tall prints which were designed to hang on the *hashira*, or square pillar of a Japanese house. He was able to adapt his design to this difficult shape with consummate skill. In three such prints in the Rockefeller Collection, Koryusai has portrayed that exotic, almost magically splendid bird, the Chinese pheasant. In one, a pheasant is perched on the bough of a pine tree over a swift waterfall. The bird's long brilliant tail feathers hang down to a clump of pink peonies growing from the rocks below. The fan-like forms of stylized pine branches climb in a rhythmic pattern up the picture. In another print, a pheasant stands on a rock overhanging a stream with his tail spreading in a fan against a group of peonies, while above the rose-colored flowers hover two small birds against a black sky. The pheasant, the peonies, the little birds, in green, rose and soft grays, against the black sky which we know is in reality deeply blue, make a truly charming design, feminine in feeling, virile in execution. Even more captivating is a

pillar print of golden pheasants on a snow-laden pine bough above a waterfall. (Illustrated on page 6.) Here design has attained perfection. The print would be fascinating in monochrome. In the dull sage-green, orange-red, pink, and greenish gray on a rich cream-colored ground, it is a masterpiece.

A very beautiful pillar print in the collection has been variously attributed to Haronobu and to Koryusai. (Illustrated on page 7.) A kingfisher is poised over a clump of iris growing in a pond—that is all, but the wonderful rhythmic lines of the blowing iris leaves and the exquisite harmony and quiet beauty of tone and color lift the print to greatness.

Of much interest and rarity are four prints, attributed to Koryusai, executed in the manner of the ancient Chinese *ishizuri*, or prints made from incised stone slabs. The Koryusai prints were made from wood-blocks on which the design was incised in *ishizuri* fashion and printed in blue. When the sheets came from the block the pattern was in white outline, then Chinese white, gray, and green and red color were added by hand. The resultant effect is not unlike a painting with definite impasto. The four prints are *kakemono-ye*, or prints in the shape of the hanging scroll picture. They all depict falcons, the best preserved being one which shows a falcon on a loquat tree. Each feather on the bird's gray back is outlined with white. The green shaded leaves and red loquat fruit are very effective against the sky-blue background. About a dozen of these prints are known to have been made by Koryusai, and it has been suggested that they were probably executed by him after he had given up ordinary print designing to become an official court artist. It is most probable that very few impressions of any one print were made, and that accounts for their rarity today. One must add, however, that no less an authority than Laurence Binyon believes them to be Chinese and not Japanese prints at all.

A contemporary of Harunobu and Koryusai was Shigemasa (1739–1820), founder

of the Kitao school, and an artist whose work synthesized the qualities of his fellow-designers into a style of restrained beauty essentially his own. There are five bird prints by him included in the collection, among them a pillar print of a falcon and a print of domestic fowl in a bamboo yard, which are interesting in design and quietly pleasing in color.

Two of Shigemasa's most famous pupils are also represented. Shunman (1757–1820) who is noted for his fantasy and his handling of grays, and Keisai Masayoshi. Shunman was of a nature bound to be interested in that fascinating type of print we know as *surimono*, those "most seductive morsels of Japanese art," which were elaborately printed for private distribution in honor of some festive occasion,—a birthday, a happy announcement, or a new year greeting. All the refine-



KINGFISHER AND IRIS
by Koryusai

ments of printing technique were bestowed upon them, *gauffrage*, or blind printing, the use of metallic dusts, a multiplication of color blocks. Their subject matter is usually birds, animals, flowers or still life, rather than the human figure, and, together with the poems with which they are generally inscribed, is essentially symbolic. Due to the care lavished upon them, they often attain a rare exquisiteness. Mrs. Rockefeller's collection contains five *surimono* by Shunman, one of the most charming being a delicate impression of pheasants on a hillock with flowering plum-blossoms in the background.

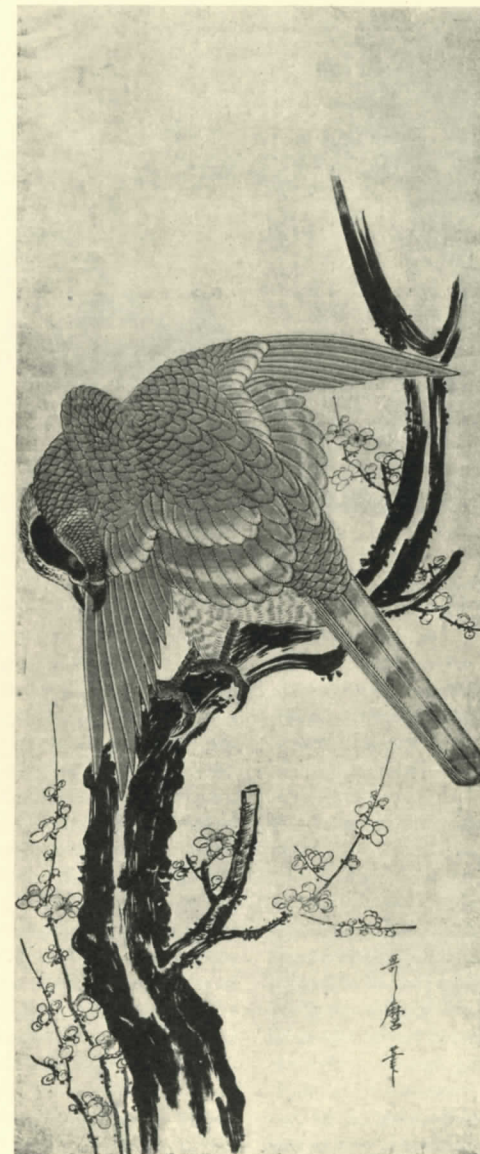
Keisai Masayoshi (1761-1824) was a keen lover of nature, and he concentrated his attention upon the faithful delineation of its beauties. Most of his work which has survived is from books of nature studies. These were executed in bright colors and possess vitality and charm. Some twelve designs, eight of which are in duplicate, are among the Masayoshi prints in the collection, one particularly pleasant sheet showing two little birds swinging on a



SPARROWS AND BAMBOO
(Black and White Print)
by Utamaro

slender red maple bough with wind-blown tasselled grasses below. Besides these book sheets, there is an effectively designed print of a sparrow on a bamboo spray, and two *surimono*, a large one depicting chrysanthemums and butterflies, and a New Year's gift card with "Ai" fish and yellow roses.

Among the names of Japanese color print designers most familiar to Occidentals is that of Utamaro, whose pictures of tall, slender, graceful ladies of the Yoshiwara have been known to Europeans since the Dutch brought them from Nagasaki during the artist's lifetime. Had he followed his first bent, he might have been numbered among his country's great naturalists. His teacher has recorded how as a child Utamaro would become absorbed in watching a dragonfly which he had tethered with a string, or a cricket held in the palm of his hand, and when the boy grew to manhood it was the glossy-backed or gauzy-winged insects, the iridescent shells, the variously plumaged birds of his native land that first engaged his brush. Though, submissive to the mode of the day, he soon turned his attention to the beauties of Yoshiwara, yet his interest in nature never died, and his prints of birds and flowers and shells combine accuracy with beauty in incomparable fashion. In the Rockefeller Collection there are three pages from a book of shells wherein these fragile jewels of the sea are strewn in delicate confusion amid seaweed and rocks. The ebb tide has abandoned them on the yellow sand, but they lie still touched with the glamour of ocean. Their exquisite strangeness, their exotic and whimsical loveliness have been somehow captured and preserved for us. A print which exhibits a similar delicacy is one which depicts two white herons on a winter eve when the sky is graying and snow bends the bamboo branches low over the pond they haunt. The graceful birds are drawn in delicate outline, subtly suggestive of their white ghostly beauty in the fading light of the day's end. A very different spirit is that expressed in a stylized simplification of two sparrows, one in



FALCON ON PLUM-TREE

by Utamaro



POPPIES IN THE WIND

by Hokusai

white reserve against a gray bamboo stalk as he swings among the dull green leaves, the other a twittering little creature on the wing, in gray and black, as though created by a few strokes of a well-linked brush. (Illustrated on page 8.) While for meticulous draughtsmanship and sympathetic portrayal of the beauty which underlies the falcon's majesty, no finer example can be found than that which is reproduced on page 9. It is almost a monochrome, all gray and black, save for the pale red beak and the yellow eyes and feet of the bird. The curving plum-tree stump, with its sparse blossoms, on which he stands as he bends to preen his wing feathers, is broadly, impressionistically treated in comparison to the very careful drawing of the falcon and serves to emphasize his perfection. Another mood, one of charming sprightliness, is exhibited by Utamaro in a print showing a pair of cranes with young. In the background is a clump of scrub pine, and the dull green needles form a quiet harmony with the gray feathers of the birds. The hungry, or merely vociferous,

young birds are amusing in contrast to the disdainful dignity of their elders. Altogether, there are twenty Utamaro prints in the collection. Seven are flower prints. Six of them are pictures of flower arrangements, four of which are printed simply in black and gray. In one of these monochromes, Utamaro has taken for subject the poetic symbol of "the snow obi," an arrangement in which a branch of flowering plum dips beneath the white sand, representing snow, that fills the shallow dish in which it sets. An accompanying poem which may be translated, "the plum-tree has a snow obi," elucidates the print's meaning. In Japan, the plum-tree is the first to flower, and sometimes the late snows will scarf its lower branches, giving its spring beauty a wintry *obi*, as the sash is named which girdles the body of a Japanese lady. To understand the delight the Japanese take in such playful symbolism is to understand the spirit of Japan.

Utamaro had no pupils of genius. Perhaps the most talented was Kikumaro, who from about 1795 to 1805 signed himself,

Tsukimaro. There are three bird prints by Tsukimaro in the collection, two in black and white and the third tinted by hand with pale colors. An attractive print by Tsukimaro's pupil, Yoshimaro, shows a parrot on a flowering peach-tree bough.

If Utamaro had a paucity of able pupils, he was not without interesting rivals. There was the fascinating Yeishi, an artist of gentle birth who for years forsook painting for print designing. The refinement and subtlety which distinguish his work may be seen in the print of a heron in the moonlight reproduced on the cover of this bulletin. Simply, freely and effectively drawn, the picture of the pensive heron hunched up on the old plum-tree bough, whence sparse flowers, like children of an elderly parent, add just enough white to the white of the bird, would be excellent prose were it denuded of its exquisitely modulated grays and subtle yellow lights; but Yeishi chose to transmute it to poetry, to infuse it with the very distillation of a chilly moonlight night in early spring. The pale ghostly moon sheds a pale ghostly light on bird and bough. The white bird is a dreaming spectre, his rounded body the materialization of the immaterial disc in the heavens. In this print, so pregnant with poetry, the suggestion of the ineffable beauty of quiet, lonely moments is inter-fused like a poignant overtone with a haunting picturization of a spring night in Japan.

Another rival, or perhaps one might better say, contemporary, of Utamaro's, possibly a fellow-pupil under Sekiyen, was Choki, who is represented in the collection by a print of a blackbird on a flowering rosebush, bold in design and coloring, straightforward and effective. Still another pupil of Sekiyen was Sekijo, who is better known as a writer. With Choki he belonged to the so-called Toriyama School. The Rockefeller Collection includes a Sekijo pillar print of a pheasant and peony, reminiscent of Koryusai, and a broadsheet of a falcon chasing small birds past a pine-tree, in which swift movement and a feeling of air is ably rendered.

During Utamaro's latter years a school of print designers founded by Shunsho, the eminent master of the actor print who had been a contemporary of Shigemasa and Koryusai, was steadily growing in influence and importance. Among many able men there was one great genius. This was the remarkable personality and fecund artist we know today as Hokusai (1760-1849). After an apprenticeship in the studio of Shunsho, he began his original work under the brush name of Shunro. It was not until 1797 he used the name of Hokusai, and while throughout his long life of ninety years he assumed a variety of brush names, it is that of Hokusai by which we identify him today. He was not a cultured artist, and from the Oriental point of view his work is essentially plebeian; but his incomparable zest and verve, his astounding inexhaustible creativeness, his amazing draughtsmanship, his cleverness and originality, won the admiration of his contemporaries and gained him a secure place in posterity's regard. He was at his prime in the early decades of the 19th century, although he himself said that all he produced before the age of seventy was not worth taking into account. The interest in nature which Utamaro had shyly nurtured in the 18th century, Hokusai fanned to a popular passion in the 1800's by his celebrated landscape series, such as his "Thirty-six Views of Fuji," his "Hundred Views of Fuji," his "Waterfalls," and "Bridges." He indulged his interest in flowers and birds with the same zestful exuberance and capability, to which some thirty-three prints in the Rockefeller Collection bear testimony.

The Hokusai prints in the collection include narrow *tanzaku*, fan-shaped prints, or *uchiwa-ye*, the medium-sized vertical prints known as *chubans*, a few large uprights, and several *yoko-ye* or large horizontal prints. Some are strikingly virile, like the brilliant fan-print of a pheasant and a mottled brown snake; others have a charming prettiness, somewhat feminine in quality, like that of the rosy-throated bird on the blossoming cherry-tree against the blue



CRANES ON SNOW-LADEN PINE
by Hokusai

sky, the rare horizontal print of meticulously drawn little gray birds and boughs of flowering plum, or the yellow songster swinging on a spray of pink roses. There are gay prints like that of the crossbill on the wild thistle with its blue-green leaves and red flowers, and prints of delicate charm like that of the blue and gray wag-tail beneath lovely drooping racemes of wistaria. As a contemporary said "Whatever it be that his eyes, devoted to nature, absorb into themselves, he works it out with severity and precision." There is a rare *chuban* print in four tones of blue, showing a tumble of bluebirds above blue morning-glories, which is delightful. A large vertical print of two stately cranes standing on the curving trunk of a great pine-tree heaped with new-fallen snow is a masterpiece of design. (Illustrated on page 12.) As a rival, there is a print of a black and white falcon tethered to a richly-curtained rail, while nearby a cherry-tree in full bloom is seen against a pale blue sky. The majestic bird stands with lifted head, his predatory eye scanning the heavens. Another print of great beauty is one showing a pair of wonderfully drawn mandarin ducks on a hillock, printed in soft colors. The drake has his eyes half closed as he bends his head to preen his breast, and his pink webbed feet are marvels of beauty. Three of the most beautiful Hokusai designs are large flower prints. One shows pink hibiscus with dark green leaves against a yellow background, with a little pink and gray bird, like a detached flower, hovering near. The other two might be described as pictures of the wind. To exactly express it we need but change "trees" to "flowers" in Christina Rossetti's poem:

"Who hath seen the wind?
Neither you nor I;
But when the *flowers* bow down
their heads,
The wind is passing by."

In one, large pink poppies bow their gorgeous heads before a strong breeze. The notched, pointed leaves are dark green, the

center of the flowers blue. The poppies' vigorous stalks swirl against a sky-blue background. It is truly the wind as much as the flowers that Hokusai has taken for his subject, for the movement is essential to the design. (Illustrated on page 10.) In the second picture of the wind, the artist shows us a clump of pink peonies and a mottled brown butterfly helpless before the briskly moving air. The breeze twists and turns the peony leaves, and the dappled light and dark green of the upper and under sides of the leaves carries the rhythmic agitation through the whole design. In the writer's opinion, this is one of the most exquisite prints in the Rockefeller Collection.

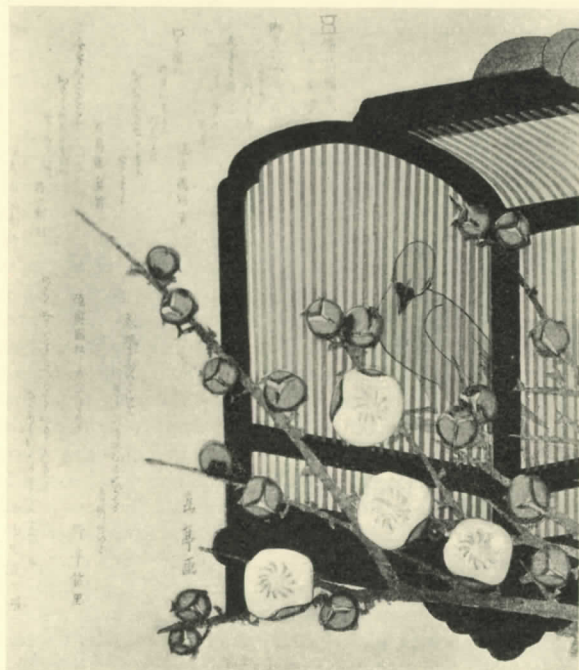
It was inevitable that an artist as versatile and tireless as Hokusai should design *surimono*. There is an interesting one in the collection. On a gray background flushed with pink at the top, a flowering branch forms a pleasing pattern. Upon its green stem a ruddy-breasted gray bird clings. The fascinating aspect of the design is the play of color in the flowers, the under sides of the petals being a deep purple, the upper surfaces, white.

Hokusai had at least two pupils, Gakutei and Hokkei, who became famous for their *surimono*. There is a Gakutei *surimono* among the Rockefeller prints. (Illustrated on page 14.) It shows a Japanese songster in a cage. One can just discern the pale green bird behind the red bars. Stylized plum blossoms, the flowers white, the buds red, are tossed carelessly in front of the cage. The print is so planned that the rain of delicate writing which carries the poetical message may be disregarded without robbing the design of its effect. Hokkei (1780-1850) was perhaps Hokusai's best pupil. There are six Hokkei prints in the collection, all *surimono*. They show the meticulous finish, the technical perfection, characteristic of this type of print, together with good draughtsmanship and a sensitive feeling for design. Among them is a long *surimono*, a horizontal panel, showing yellow water lilies and green reeds with a gray-winged dragonfly poised on a

bent stalk's tasselled tip, a design simple and refreshing. Still another pupil of Hokusai who designed *surimono* was Shinsai. There is in the collection a very delicate design by him, in browns and greens, of a tangle of autumn flowers and grasses. Three other pupils of Hokusai, Yanagawa Shigenobu, his son-in-law, Taigaku and Keiri, are represented, the first and last with two prints, and the second with three.

A number of prints by an artist who

branch. The outlines are in pink, the oak leaves are grayish-red speckled with white or pink. The other print, with white outlines, shows a parrot clinging to a gray bough above a flowering rosebush. Both are excellently printed and effectively decorative. Two prints which depict domestic fowl are most distinguished for their virile zest and masterful draughtmanship. In a highly stylized cock and hen, he has caught the pompous arrogance of the male



SURIMONO: GREEN SONGSTER IN CAGE AND FLOWERING PLUM
by Gakutei

worked independently of schools in the latter years of the 18th century catch the attention, among the many fine prints in the collection, for their originality and evident distinction. I refer to the prints by Jakucho. They all have the dead black backgrounds for which Jakucho was noted. Two are interesting examples of *ishizuri*, the adaptation of the method of the Chinese stone-print to wood-blocks. One of these is of a red parrot on an oak tree

and the smug complacency of the hen in admirable fashion; but it is perhaps the print of the single rooster, vibrant with life, poised on one foot, his glorious tail feathers rising in a magnificent swirl, which is the more fascinating. (Illustrated on page 16.)

Before we turn our attention to the artists of the Utagawa School, among whom the famous Hiroshige is the great and shining light, mention should be made of

several artists whose work was begun in the 18th century although their activity extended into the early 1800's. There is Shunzan (working 1775-1810), a pupil of Shunsho. He is the author of three designs in the interesting assemblage of forty-one fan-prints in the collection. The prints by Shunzan are cleverly arranged compositions: one of a rooster and hen beneath a flowering plum-tree; one, a great pine seen against the rising sun; the third, a scene of cormorant fishing in the Nagara river. Two print designers whose early training was under an artist of the Chinese School named Torin were Shunsen and Sekkyo. Their work was produced about the close of the Kwansei Period (1789-1801) and in the early years of the 19th century. Of the prints by these artists, those of the former are the more interesting. There is a distinctly Chinese feeling in Shunsen's broadsheet of windblown pink peonies and yellow butterflies, and the long *surimono* in which a clump of red peonies adequately balances an expanse of empty air is very pleasing. The Shunsen landscape with cranes wading in a stream whose banks are thick-grown with young pines, while brilliantly red on the horizon peeps the rim of the morning sun, has a broken bar of red in the sky, a device characteristic of this artist. Of the two prints by Sekkyo, one is a black and white of chrysanthemums and hovering bird, the other, printed in blue-green on a gray ground, depicts a white-headed bird perched on a blossoming plum-tree. Evidence of the trend toward naturalism and the influence of the Chinese color print upon the Japanese print designers of the early 19th century is given in twelve prints from a book of flowers and insects by Shunkei, published about 1820. A grasshopper on a yellow squash blossom, beetles crawling over an ear of corn, a bee and a yellow wasp resting on a lotus plant, a red dragon-fly poised on a delicate vine, a hairy caterpillar devouring a leaf, a praying-mantis, a sheet of many-colored butterflies, all attest to Shunkei's extraordinary observation and absorbed interest in detail. These faithful delineations of na-

ture are printed in soft, harmonious colors and show a nice feeling for design. Included in the collection there is also a broadsheet by Shunkei where a gracefully disposed pink camellia and a spray of narcissus complement a poem.

Parallel with the activity of Hokusai and his pupils in the first half of the 19th century was that of successive generations of artists belonging to the Utagawa School, founded by Toyoharu in the 18th century and nurtured into prominence by Toyokuni, the rival of Utamaro. Toyokuni's most famous pupil, Kunisada (1787-1865), by his prolific output of prints, attained a reputation and influence surpassed only by Hokusai and Hiroshige. Although his chief work lay in the field of the figure print, he produced some landscapes, and that he designed flower prints is shown by three *uchiwa-ye*, or fan-shaped prints, in our collection. One of these is essentially a landscape, showing clumps of purple iris growing beside a winding stream while butterflies flutter overhead. Another is a rather garish print of love-birds and great pink peonies. The third Kunisada print depicts a cuckoo crying as he flies across the white moon's disc rising above the clouds into a gray-blue sky.

Toyokuni's second distinguished pupil was Kuniyoshi (1798-1861). If less prolific, he was more profound than Kunisada. The three examples of his work in the Rockefeller Collection indicate an artist of sensitiveness and sincerity. One is a fan-print in which sprays of red and yellow chrysanthemums with their dark blue-green leaves are seen against a gray sky with the pale circle of the full moon cutting the upper right-hand corner of the composition. A horizontal print of pink begonias and other flowers on a yellow-tinted background has grace and felicity. A pillar print of a falcon poised on a broken limb of a great pine-tree, his lifted gray wings partially obscuring the red circle of the rising sun, as he gazes down to a nestful of hungry fledglings half hidden amid the green pine needles, is rather magnificent. Unfortunately, the print is not in

very good condition, but in conception and execution it is very fine, and in it Kuniyoshi challenges comparison with his 18th century predecessors. The result of an interesting collaboration may be seen in a diptych wherein Kuniyoshi contributed

was a most interesting artist and shines with reflected glory as the master of Hiroshige. In seven narrow panels, *tanzaku*, five printed in black and soft grays, one in blue, and one touched with color, Toyohiro brings us impressions of birds and flowers



ROOSTER

by Jakuchu

the portrait of a lady and Hokusai some little birds, flowers, and a basket of fish.

Although he did not attain the wide celebrity of the two pupils of Toyokuni just mentioned, another pupil, who was his younger brother, Toyohiro (1763-1828),

with the directness of a skillfully wielded brush. Something of the immediacy and intimate quality of ink drawings is felt in three large black and white prints, showing respectively, cranes among reeds, a hawk in swift pursuit of a goose, and a cuckoo

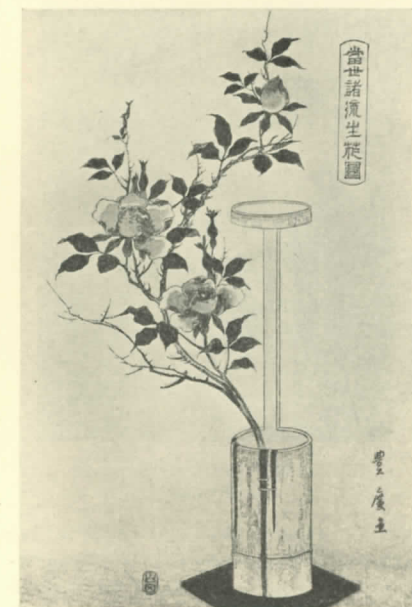
flying in the rain; while several *chubans* printed in soft modulated blues are charming. There are two pillar prints by Toyohiro, each depicting that favorite bird of the Japanese print designers, the stern falcon. In one, the bird is ruddy brown like the trunk of the pine-tree on which he stands; the other, a more sensitive and appealing print, shows no color save the pale yellow background against which the dignified bird of prey and the blossoming plum which serves as his watch tower are drawn with a refined sensitiveness. The collection includes also a large black and white print of a tethered falcon and a very beautiful print from a series of pictures of flower arrangements, which shows a single spray of pink roses in a bamboo holder. (Illustrated on this page.)

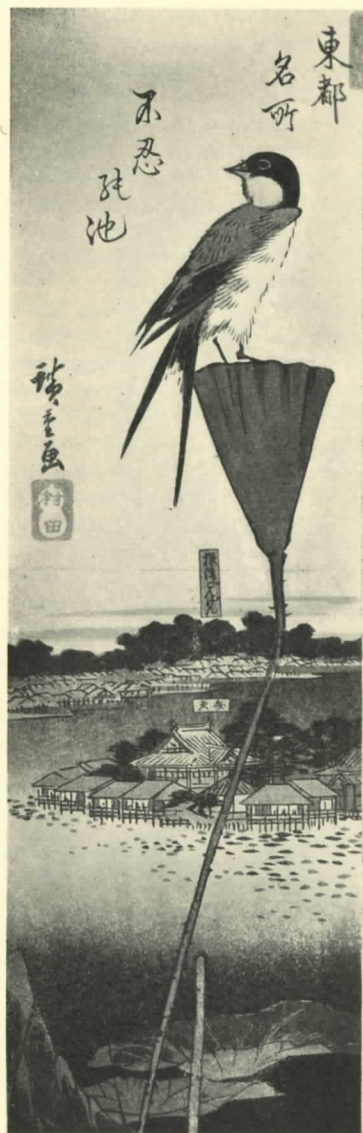
The artist who has been, purely through his art, the most fluent interpreter of the esthetic of the East to the Western world is that most gifted pupil of Toyohiro to whom he gave the last two syllables of his name, Hiroshige (1797-1858). He opened the eyes of Occidental artists to the incalculable power of suggestion and the astonishing forcefulness of purposeful omissions. In series after series of prints, issued during a working life of over forty years, he gave the world fascinating glimpses of his native land. Anyone who has lived with his prints, if chance take him to Japan, will never wander as a stranger in a strange land. For Hiroshige's landscapes are for us like the little mirrors attached to window frames in Holland, or the glass at the end of Prince Ali's telescope, they reflect that which is beyond direct vision and bring the far distant near, and their magic is the magic of sincere art, "the march of the mind into life."

It was inevitable that one whose epitaph should proclaim how he would "climb mountains and descend to valleys, in order to sketch from nature" should be interested in portraying flowers and birds. Some three hundred and seventeen sorties into this delightful field are included in the Rockefeller Collection. A bird on a flowering bough—what a dulcet strain Hiroshige

played on this theme, with ever varying nuance! A green nightingale singing his heart out on a blossoming plum-tree, a little acrobat of a Japanese tit twirling about a cherry branch, a woodpecker perched on a gray stem of magnolia, a chirruping sparrow shaking the spring snow from a pink camellia spray, a yellow canary swinging on a purple wistaria vine—glimpses into a world of innocent loveliness and unpremeditated gaiety.

For his bird and flower prints, Hiroshige was fond of the vertical panel of various sizes; two-thirds of the Hiroshige prints in the collection being either *koban*, *tanzaku*, or the small *hoso-ye*. Among the rather rare prints are two of the last-mentioned type, with landscape backgrounds. In each case we look down at the world from a great height, eye-level with the bird. In one, a cuckoo is flying near the mast of a ship at night, while far below are sailboats, a peopled bridge over a deep blue river, and lush green marshes. In the other, a rosy-cheeked bird surveys the early morn-

FLOWER ARRANGEMENT
by Toyohiro



BIRD ON LOTUS
by Hiroshige

ing from a green lotus pod above a blue harbor with houses clustered on a promontory in the middle distance. (Illustrated on this page.) Two other rarities are small panel prints of flowers: one a clump of herbaceous peonies, and one a spray of pink

camellias half veiled in soft, new-fallen snow. Flowers waylaid by a flurry of snow captivate the Japanese imagination and delight some deeply innate sense of incongruity as provocative of happiness as grosser incongruity is of laughter. A very charming panel of mandarin ducks not often seen is that showing two of these birds, symbols of conjugal felicity, swimming happily about under some drooping reeds. The fluidity of the drawing, the harmonious disposition of red, blue and gray, the convincing realism attained by simple means, create a print of rare attractiveness. A somewhat larger panel of great rarity shows a sparrow flying by a large bamboo stalk. It is printed wholly in grays and in the most delicate gradations.

Among exceptionally fine impressions of well-known prints is the panel of three wild geese rushing across the moon, with its appended poem,

"When shall mine eyes again
Look upon such an evening?
The moon hangs vast in the heavens;
The wild geese speed on their way."

where the birds are catapulting down from the great white circle of the moon into a rich blue sky dappled with white cumulus cloud. (Illustrated on page 19.) Another splendid impression is that of the owl dreaming on a pine bough in the moonlight, a humorous little brown bird with sleepy yellow eyes, his spirit, as he rocks on the slanting bough, rocking in the curved boat of the crescent moon which gleams through the pine needles.

"Sailing away, to the music of the wind in the pine,
With the moon for a rolling boat."

Then, there is the print of five little swallows in headlong flight past a cherry tree; that of the two plover flying in the moonlight above a tossing wave; and that of the superbly colored pheasant in autumnal braken; all excellent. Of prints with a

blue ground, there is a very fine impression of a bird on a loquat tree in white reserve. Nor could one find a more exquisite impression of the Sakai Ferry print from the Famous Sights of Yedo series, with snowy egrets floating over the deep blue water toward their companions in the green reeds. Two beautiful prints in perfect condition are the morning-glory panels, of vivid but by no means garish coloring, in one of which a green grasshopper, like an insect Jack of the Beanstalk, is following a tenuous stem to a glorious blue flower. (Illustrated on page 21.)

Hiroshige loved morning-glories, those trumpet blooms on slender sinuous stalks, flowers "at once winsome and delicate like a forgotten rainbow or an angel's lips parted from being charmed," and he portrayed them with exceptional felicity. They are the subject of a delightful *surimono* in the collection, and also of a very lovely fan-print, in tones of blue and rose. In Japan, fans are the universal toy, or universal necessity, as you wish. They have been used by every class of society on every occasion from time immemorial. In the 19th century there was a revival of the *uchiwa* or round rigid type, and the printed fan became popular. No prominent Ukiyoe artist was more active in designing prints for fans than Hiroshige. Flowers seem appropriate motives for fans, and it is not surprising that we have so many in our collection of bird and flower prints. A number show the marks of the fansticks and have actually served their appointed purpose. Undoubtedly there would be more floral *uchiwa* in the large collection of Hiroshige prints of that type at the Victoria and Albert Museum, if it were not for the fact that a flower or a bird picture would be less likely to be removed from the fansticks and preserved than would the print of a famous view. One beautiful fan-print in the Rockefeller Collection shows hibiscus flowers of a vivid glorious red with blue-green leaves shading to yellow-green on a gray background. (Illustrated on page 22.) Others show hydrangeas, purple iris, chrysanthemums, cherry blossoms,



WILD GEESSE AND MOON
by Hiroshige

soms, while a rare and particularly lovely one is occupied by a single white peony.

Unusual Hiroshige prints are three which take as their subject, companies of flying cranes. One is a long *surimono* on which seven black and white cranes zigzag across

a clear sky. A pillar print, which, according to Professor Fugikake of the Imperial University of Tokyo, was probably the last of his work, shows a vast number of the great birds soaring above a foam-crested wave toward the red morning sun. A broadsheet is illustrated on this page in which a careful pattern of whirling birds creates a rhythmic design as complex and self-contained as the beautiful "endless knots" beloved of Orientals and held as symbolic of immortality. To the legs of

maze combine, in sets of three or four designs, landscapes, insects, fish, still-life and a figure of Daruma, with flower subjects, the designs, in imitation of Chinese stone-rubbings, in white on a black ground. In the collection there is also an unsevered *tanzaku* floral triptych and an *oban* triptych showing bats, butterflies and fish. There are three diptychs of birds, two in the vertical or *oban* arrangement, and one horizontal diptych, which is illustrated on page 24, of a prim and self-confident crane amid



FLYING CRANES AND TANZAKU

by Hiroshige

the cranes are tied red *tanzaku*, or poem strips, and the movement of these paper pennons plays an important part in the design.

The Rockefeller Collection contains a Hiroshige horizontal *harimaze* sheet. Relatively few of these composite prints, in which several different designs intended to be cut apart are printed on a single sheet, have survived, and we are fortunate in having one showing five odd-shaped prints of birds and flowers. Four vertical *hari-*

iris blooms and trout swimming with whirlpool swiftness beneath hydrangeas. This last is printed in cleverly gradated blues.

Ten tiny narrow prints by Hiroshige, measuring about two inches wide by seven inches tall, are envelope prints, and are important for their rarity. The majority may be classed as landscape designs, but three exhibit flowering branches, one is adorned with full-blown peonies, while another shows a flying bird, resembling the mythical Chinese phoenix, or *ho-ho* bird.

With the passing of Hiroshige, the art of the Japanese color print faded to a sad decadence. There was a Hiroshige II and a Hiroshige III, and prints attributed to both are in the collection. There were the pupils of Kunisada,—Sadahide, Sadafusa, and Sadanobu,—all strongly influenced by the great Hiroshige, the last named of the three being little better than a plagiarist. Some rather interesting *uchiwa*, or fan-prints, by the first two men, are among the Rockefeller prints, and eight prints by Sadanobu, two of which are practically copies of well-known Hiroshige designs. Hiroshige's contemporary and collaborator, Keisai Yeisen, predeceased him. Of the twenty Yeisen prints in the collection, two of the finest are studies printed in blue: a horizontal print of a peony in very deep blue tones, and a vertical blue and white print of chrysanthemums. Two other prints by him which are very attractive and rather rare are those of a solemn kingfisher on a windblown bamboo and a drowsy owl on a maple bough.

There was no designer of the color print who worked in the latter half of the 19th century, save perhaps Kyosai (1831-1889), who possessed even the shadow of the genius of the earlier artists or displayed an equal sensitiveness to nature's subtleties. Kyosai was a master of black and white, and the fourteen prints of birds in the Rockefeller Collection, most of them executed in the manner of freely brushed ink painting, are very fine indeed. His pictures of black crows are marvellously expressive. His designs in a more strictly wood-block technique, such as that of the cormorants fishing beneath a willow tree or the falcon bearing his prey over tossing billows, are reminiscent of the earlier 18th century artists. Kyosai dipped deep in the well of old tradition and brought forth fresh and limpid beauty. The print illustrated on page 23, of a heron in the rain, is interesting for its clever technique. The straight lines of the rain are black where they appear against the white bird and white against the black background, and the feathers are printed by pressure alone.

There are several definite strains which



MORNING-GLORIES

by Hiroshige

may be observed in late 19th century bird and flower prints. There is the lingering influence of Hiroshige; there is a simplifica-

tion which may be traced back to the 19th century reproductions of Korin drawings, impressions of six of which are included in the collection; and there is a growing naturalistic trend which approaches Occidental realism. An artist who owed much to Hiroshige is Sagakudo, twenty of whose prints from a series entitled, "Exact Reproductions of Forty-eight Birds," are included among the Rockefeller prints. They are not mere leaves from an ornithologist's sketchbook, as the title of the series suggests. Accent is definitely on decorative design, and in spirit they err more on the side of prettiness than on over-exactitude. They are well-drawn, and often interesting compositions, but their coloring is not particularly felicitous. Two prints by Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847-1915), one of pink and blue morning-glories on a dull green background and the other of ducks with shadowy lotus plants, show the influence of the West so strongly that they scarcely seem to be Japanese. Among the modern prints are two beautiful flower studies. One is a large white peony by Jeshin, very freely but cleverly drawn, the

petals of the flower defined by contour lines of soft gray, the leaves boldly brushed in dark green. A flush of pale yellow surrounds the white flower, faintly echoing the yellow stamens at its center. The other print is a design of a single purple iris by Seiho. It resembles a water color painting from a facile brush. A gauzy insect clings to one of the broad gray leaves. The artist has transferred to the paper the richness of color and the velvety texture of the real flower.

Altogether, specimens of the work of ninety-eight designers of bird and flower prints are included in the Rockefeller Collection. Among those whose names have not been mentioned, and who are represented by two or three prints are Tokai, Setsukyo, Kosai and Tanka, the last-named artist contributing an interesting fan-shaped print of swallows and descending geese. Among those who are represented by a single print are Taito and Taigo, pupil and follower, respectively, of Hokusai; Kunitsuma, Kunisato, and Ritsen, who carried on the Toyokuni tradition; Yoshikazu, pupil of Kuniyoshi; Yuki-



RED HIBISCUS

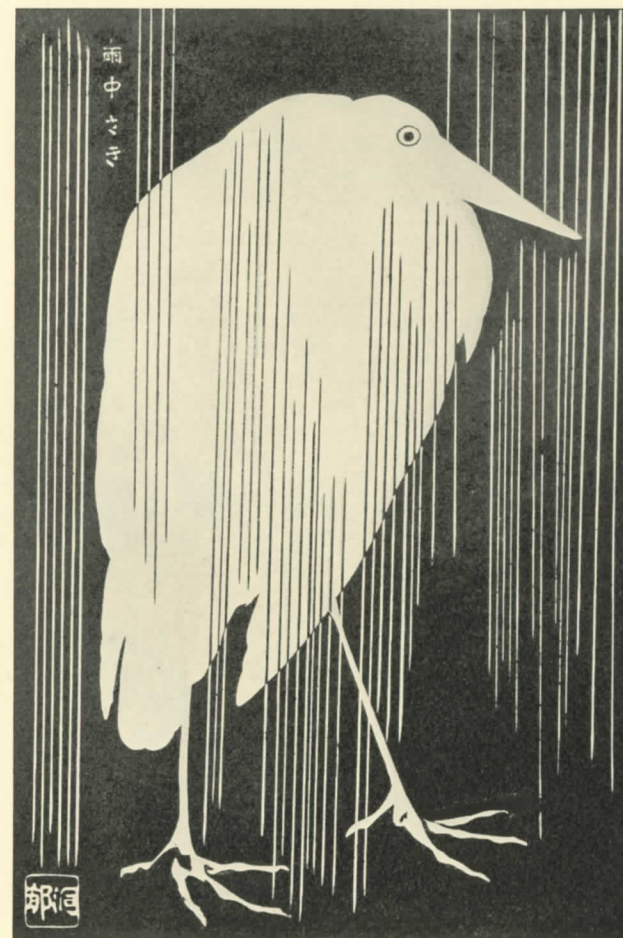
by Hiroshige

Fan-print

maro, a follower of Utamaro; Jihinari, follower of Yeishi; also, Jukusai, Sakumaru, Kanzan, Hanaya, Handai, Sukekiyo, Fumio, Seisai Yeichi, Rissen, Gengiyo, Ishasai, Gakuki, Renzan, Takanobu, Rintei, Ganrei, Sowzan, Ichiga, Keigaku, Fumino-

and a design of a goose and reeds, printed in blue, by Rissen, are of particular beauty.

A large collection of Japanese color prints which is confined to bird and flower subjects only is most unusual, if not unique. The great designers acquired their fame



HERON IN THE RAIN

by Kyosai

bu, Chowsui Sanjin, Sukei, Sakuseki, Kwamsetsu, Sakurai, Suiyen, Shuzan, Towga, Zeshin, and Hankoku. Of these single prints by lesser known men, a long *surimono* of cranes near a well by Sukei,

through their actor prints, their pictures of ladies and courtesans, their graphic interpretation of heroic legends, and in the 19th century, through series of landscapes depicting familiar or famous places in

Japan. In many cases, they must have turned to flowers and birds as an Occidental portrait painter has often turned to landscape, as Gainsborough turned to his crayon sketches of the English countryside or Sargent to his water colors of mountains and forest glade,—for relaxation and sheer self-delight. An artist, having slipped into the garment of his style, often finds it difficult to change his artistic costume. When Utamaro lifted his brush to design a bird print, he could forget his willowy ladies and become a humble and delighted student of nature once more. Nature is the great creative font, and as a bird lover

once said, "Birds enter into nature like stars into the sky, quickening her pulse and revealing the graces of her spirit." The appealing beauty of form and movement, the vivacity, the daintiness, the fastidious elegance of birds, move the Japanese soul almost as deeply as the evanescent loveliness of flowers. Birds sing and flowers bloom both in the West and the East, and these several hundred prints of the Rockefeller Collection have brought to our perception, like a familiar perfume, the delicate bouquet of an old vintage, the choice art of Japan.

MIRIAM A. BANKS



DIPTYCH: CRANE IN REEDS; SWIMMING FISH AND HYDRANGEAS

(Printed in blue)

by Hiroshige